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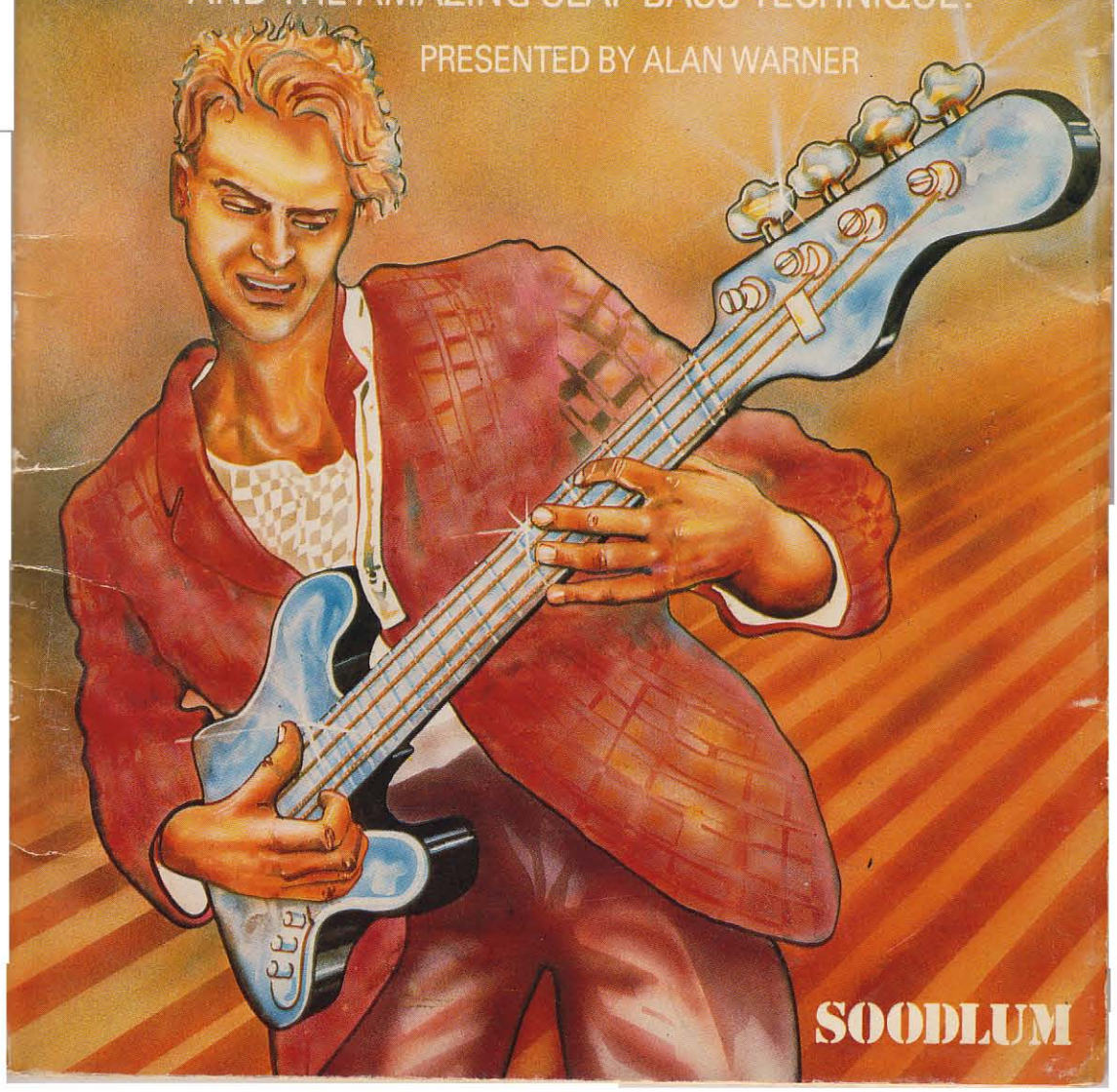
Bass Guitar

A DYNAMIC NEW APPROACH TO LEARNING BASS GUITAR, FEATURING PLECTRUM, FINGERSTYLE AND THE AMAZING SLAP BASS TECHNIQUE.

PRESENTED BY ALAN WARNER



SOODLUM

THE BASS GUITAR

by Alan Warner

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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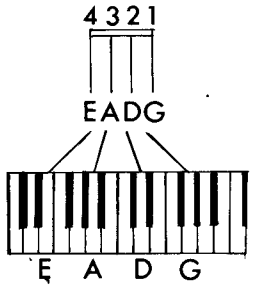
TUNING THE BASS GUITAR

1. USING A KEYBOARD

The open strings are tuned to the following notes:



2. RELATIVE TUNING:

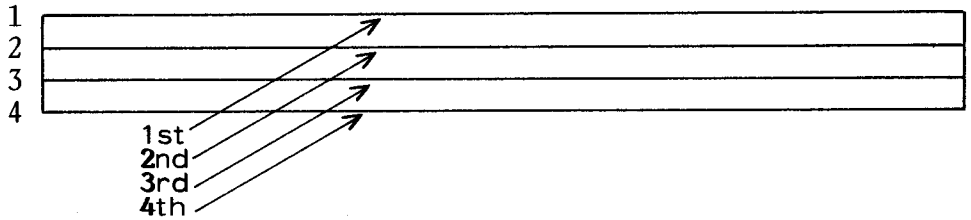
The best way to tune a bass guitar is to use harmonics. Get the first note from a tuning fork, a keyboard, or from the tape.

Harmonics are the high, bell-like notes produced when you lay your finger gently on the string and strike it. The strongest ones are to be found at the **5th, 7th** and **12th** frets.

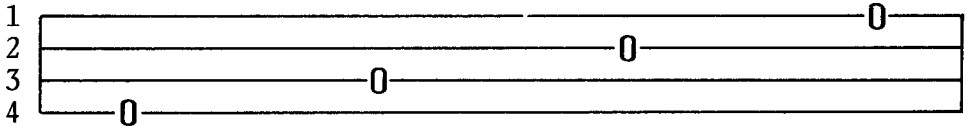
First get the **4th** fret harmonic on the **4th** string in tune. This is a high E — the same note as the open top string on a six-string guitar. Now tune the **7th** fret harmonic on the second string to the **5th** fret harmonic on the third string. Proceed in a similar fashion for the first string. When amplified, you may hear a "beating" sound when two harmonics are not in tune. When the beating slows down to the point where it is no longer audible, the bass is in tune.

READING TABLATURE

The four lines represent the four strings of the bass guitar.
1 is G, 2 is D, 3 is A, 4 is E.

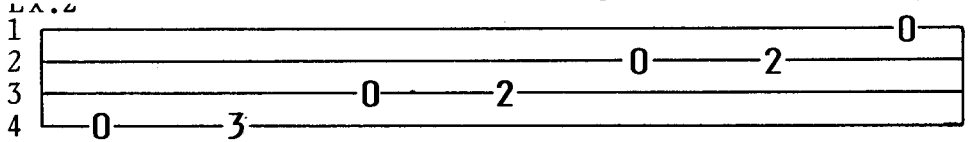


Exercise 1 Play each open string in succession.



Where you see a number in place of the "o", it indicates which fret on the string you should use.

Exercise 2 **Here are some notes (the number represents the fret to be used)**



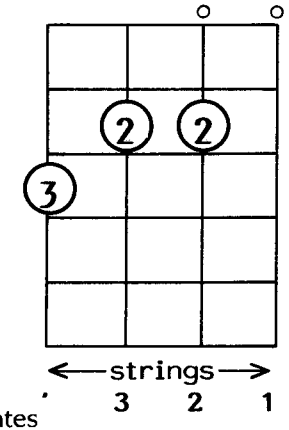
Finger charts, like the one below are used to show you which fingers to use as well as which frets.

Symbols used in this book

fret number (in this case fret 1)

Left-Hand

The number with rings indicates fingers to be used.

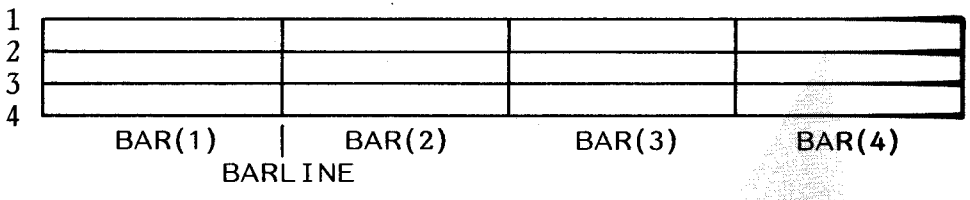


The "o" above the chart indicates that you will also be using that open string.

HO	=	Hammer-on
PO	=	Pull-off
DPO	=	Double Pull-off
∧	=	Damping
SL	=	Slide
⊓	=	Plectrum Down Stroke
V	=	Plectrum Up Stroke
∼∼	=	Vibrato
↑	=	Bend
LH	=	Left Hand
RH	=	Right Hand
RS	=	Right-hand Finger Slam-on
LS	=	Left-Hand Finger Slam-on

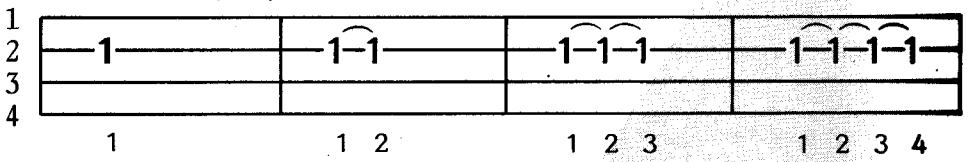
BARS, TIME VALUES AND RESTS

The tablature is divided up into bars by barlines. Normally, there are four beats in each bar.



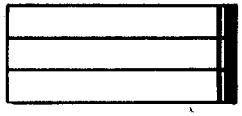
A TIE

TIME VALUE OF NOTES

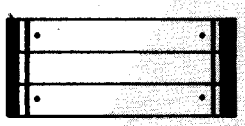


(This note lasts for one count) (This note lasts for two counts) (This note lasts for three counts) (This note lasts for four counts)

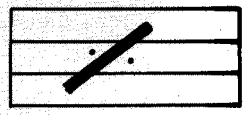
EX (3)



This indicates the end of a piece of music.



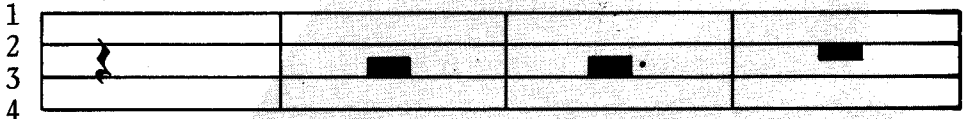
These double lines and dots indicate that the section between them should be repeated.



A diagonal line with two dots means you should repeat the previous bar.

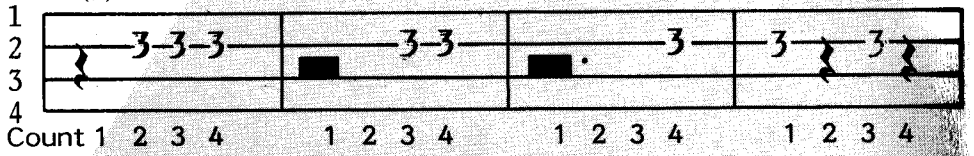
RESTS

EX (4)



One count rest for one count | Two counts rest for two counts | Three counts | Four counts rest for four counts

EX (5) TRY THIS SIMPLE EXERCISE

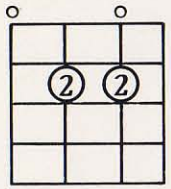


* Ties are used to indicate how many counts a note should be held for.

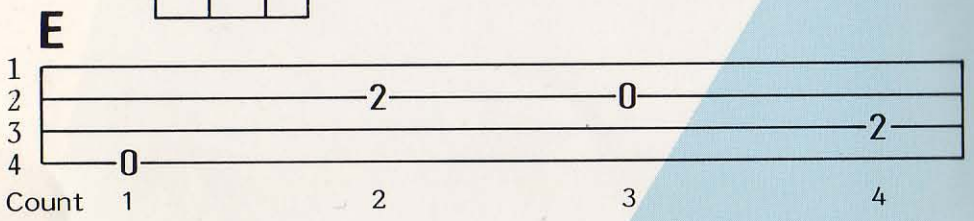
PLECTRUM STYLE

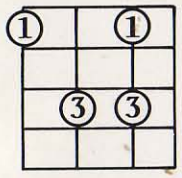
EASY ROCK BASS PATTERNS

These easy to play Rock Patterns only require Down Strokes with the Plectrum.



Timing is very important. Count or tap your foot to each note. Don't worry about speed at this stage, just count a steady 1-2-3-4.

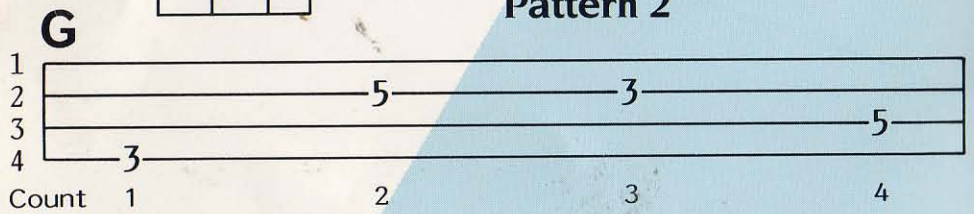


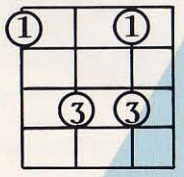


3rd Fret

You'll have to stretch your 1st and 3rd L.H. fingers on the next two patterns.

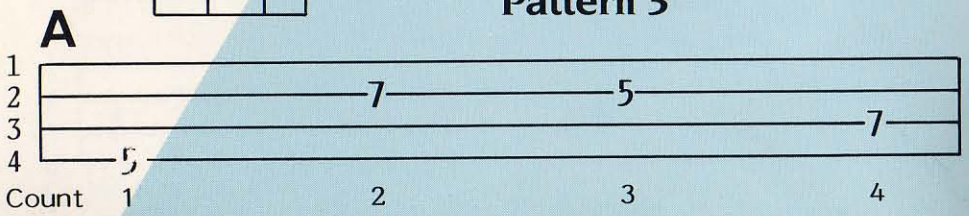
Pattern 2

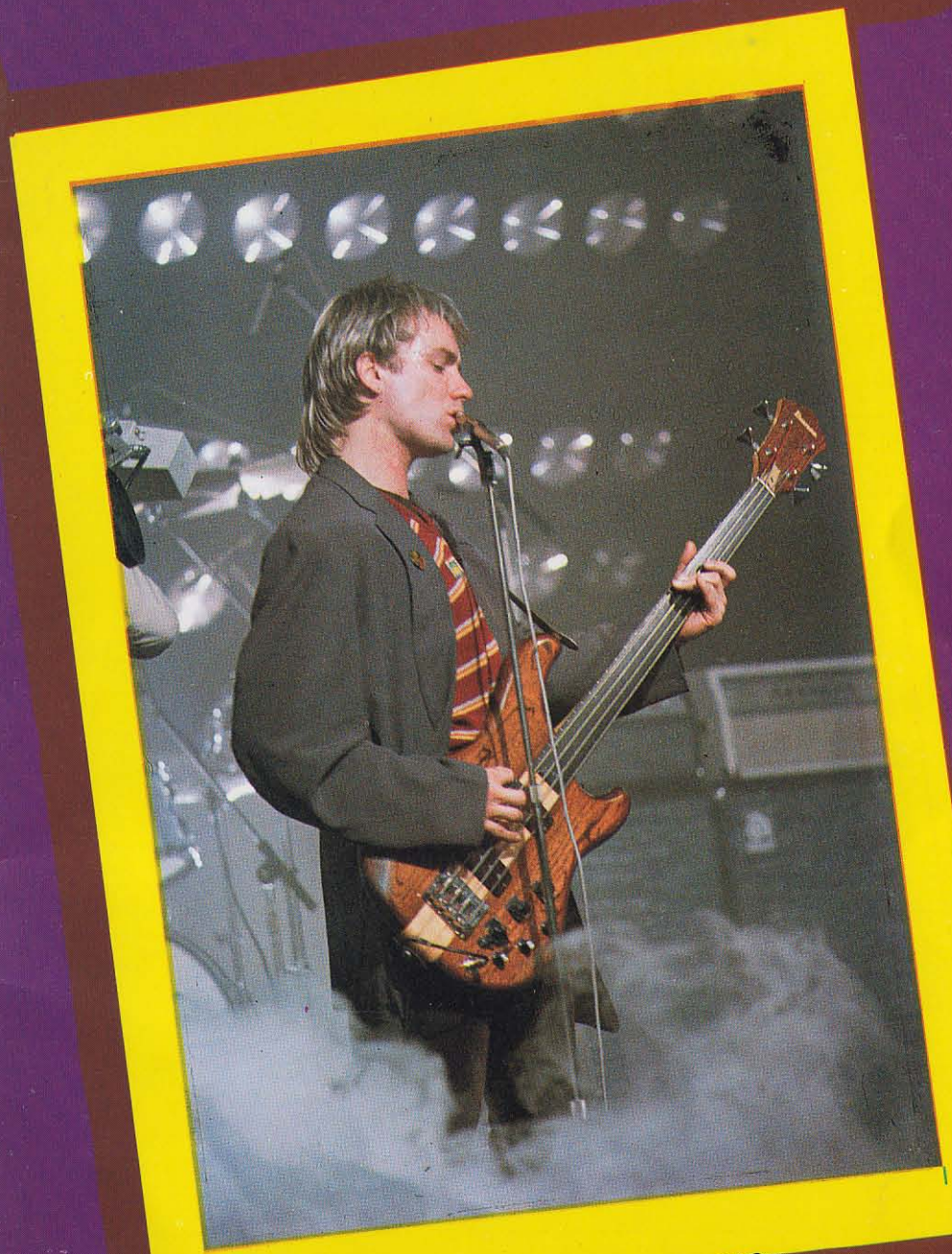




5th Fret

Pattern 3



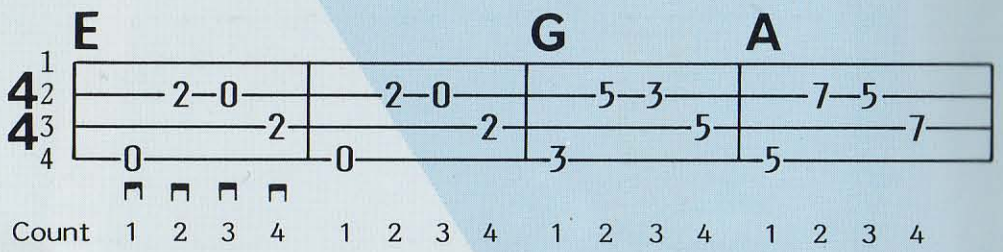


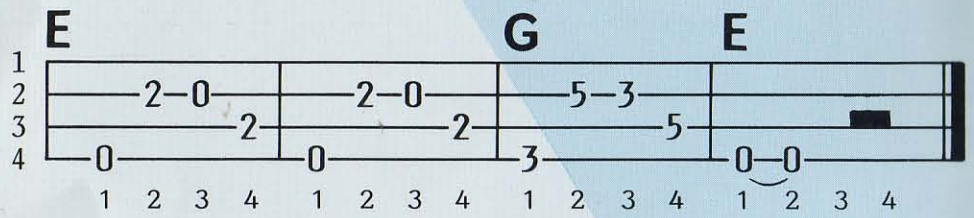
STING

ROCK BASS SEQUENCE

Down Strokes

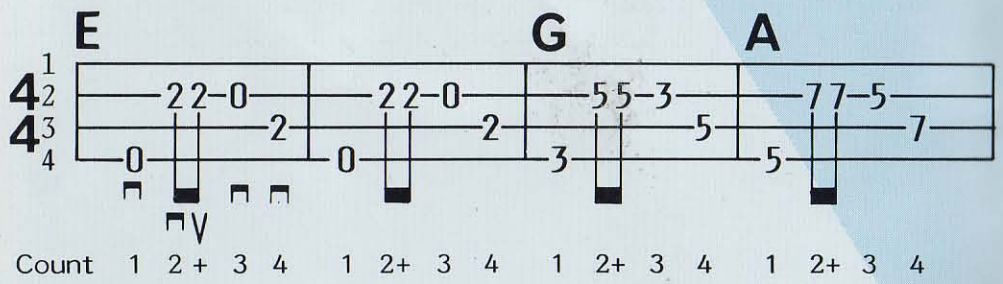
This sequence is made up of the three rock-bass patterns on page 8.
Don't forget the importance of timing!

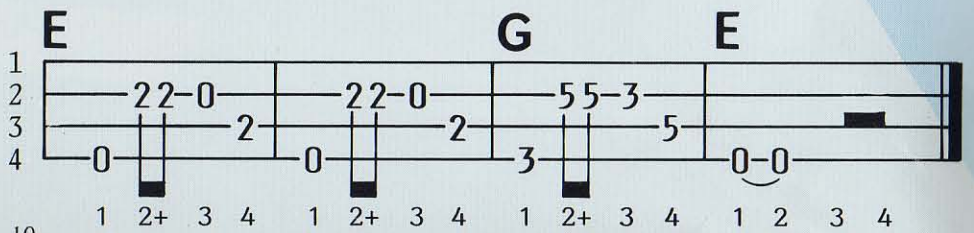




Down and Up Strokes

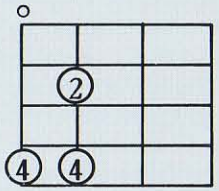
The next riff incorporates up strokes and half-beat notes.
The count is 1 2 & 3 4, except for the last bar.





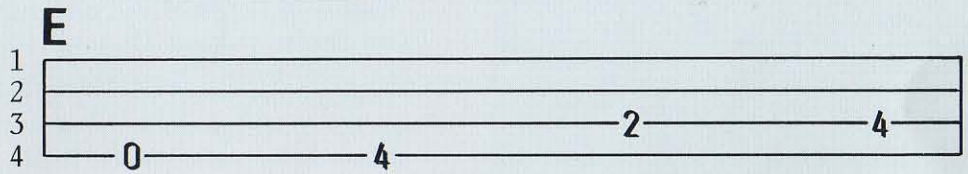
BOOGIE BASS

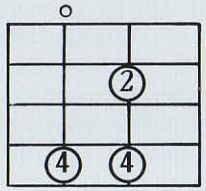
This classical boogies bass pattern has been used by countless artists from be-bop to jazz and rock.



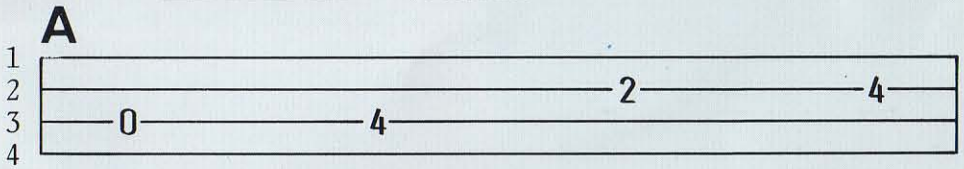
This is where we start to use the L.H. pinky (4th finger) which is never too soon. Just press as hard as you can. Again you need to stretch your L.H. fingers especially on Pattern 3.

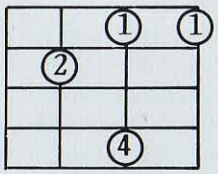
Pattern 1





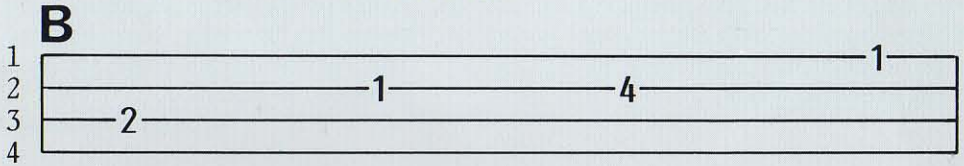
Pattern 2





Now we come to the really difficult part!

Pattern 3



These two Fender Precisions show how the model evolved during its formative years. The Example on the left dates from late 1953, that on the right is a 1962 model, which used to belong to John Entwistle.

The History of the Bass

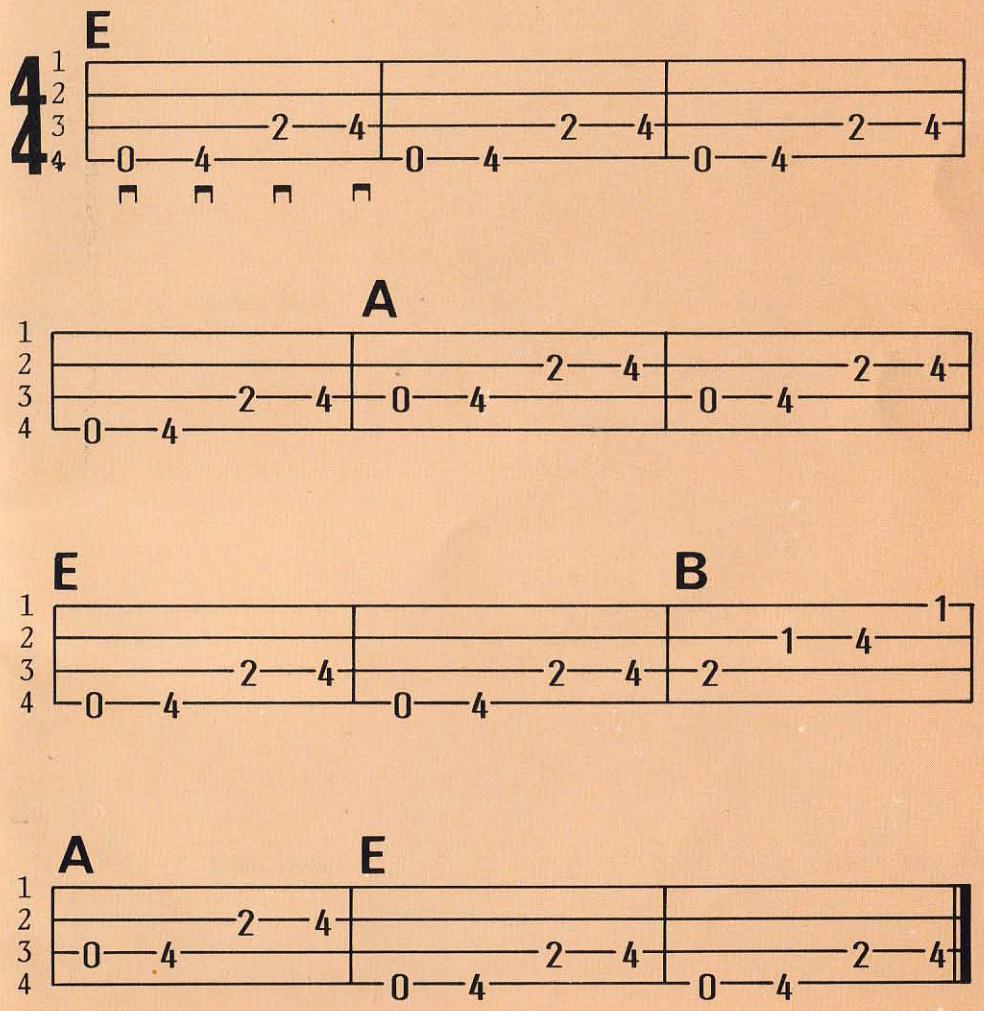
The electric bass guitar is a comparatively young instrument. Until the advent of the solid-bodied electric guitar, double bass players had not been at too much of a volume disadvantage compared to the other members in the band. By 1950 this situation had changed. The coming of pop music made other double bass drawbacks more evident, such as the fact that it was practically impossible to do a dance routine with it! It was Leo Fender, who had at that time just established his "Telecaster" electric guitar, who came to consider how "the lot" of the bassman could be improved. The product of his thinking first appeared on the market in 1951, and it was quickly apparent that he had come up with another winner: "The Precision", bass, so called on account of being fretted to make playing in tune a simple process. The Precision, which looked like an enlarged version of the Telecaster, had a scale length of 86 cm (34"), a single straight pickup, a slab-sided body and a neck made out of maple which bolted onto it. The big butterfly shaped tuners were all put on the same side of the headstock, while features like the handrest meant that double bass players could use playing styles which were familiar to them. The "Precision" also had the effect of making bass playing far more attractive to guitarists.

—continued on page 21—

12 BAR ROCK BOOGIE

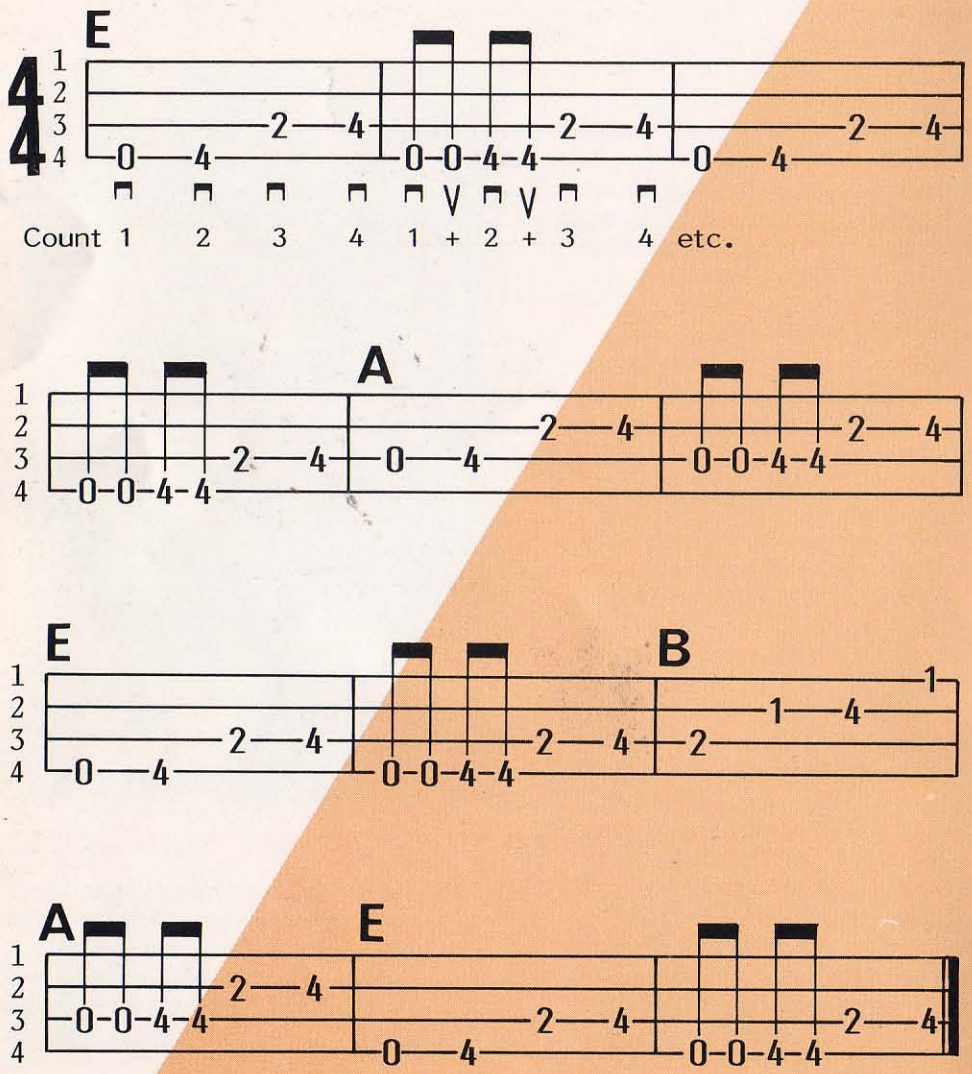
Use Down Strokes Only

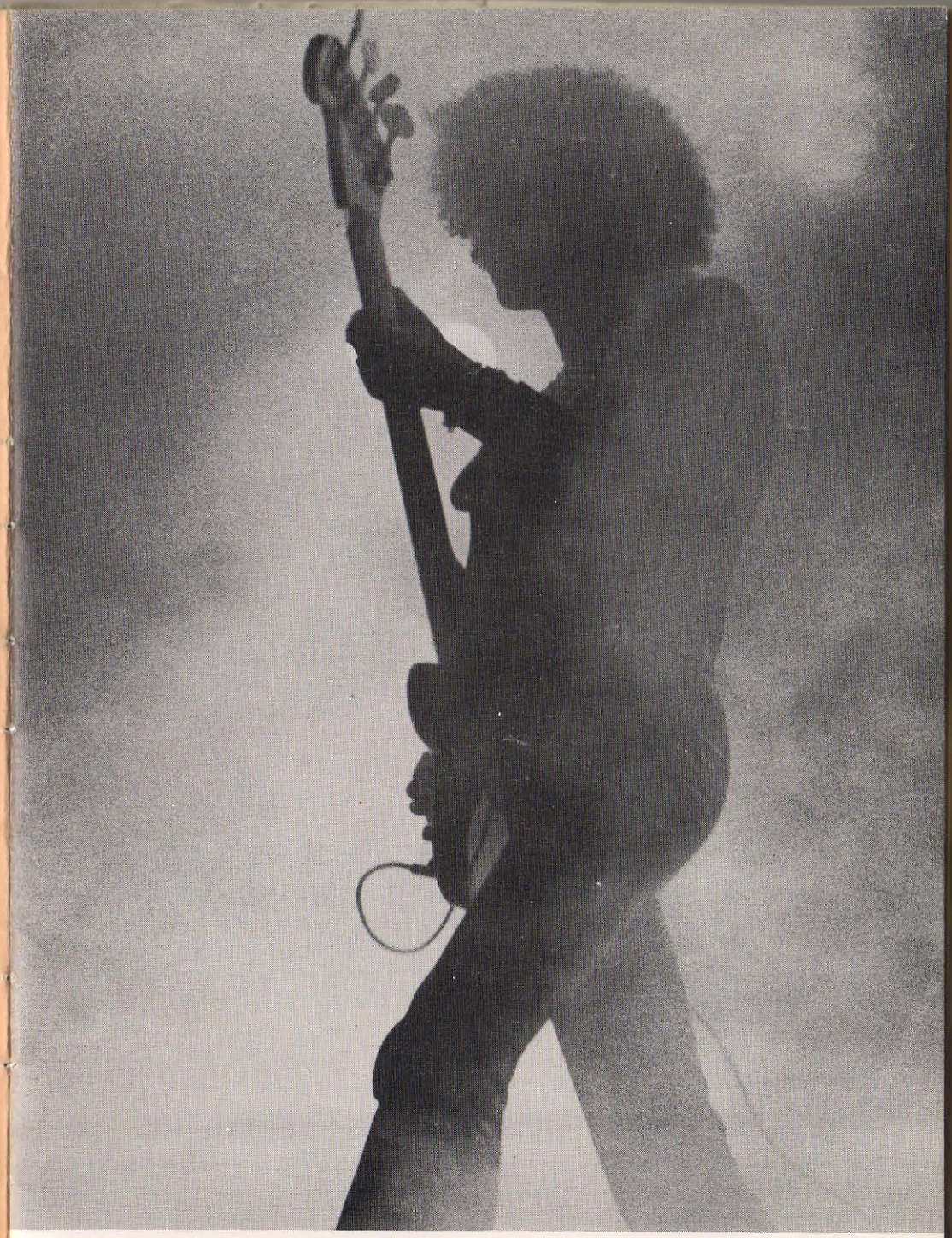
The 12 bar (whether it be rock, blues or anything else) is a standard format which is recognised by every rock, blues, jazz musician, and because the format is always the same (although there are variations of this) it enables the musicians to play (jam session) together without having to work anything out beforehand. The amount of songs that have been composed around the 12 bar format is astronomical, going back as far as 1910.



12 BAR ROCK BOOGIE BASS

To make this 12 bar more interesting you will find a combination of Down and Up Strokes on every other bar.



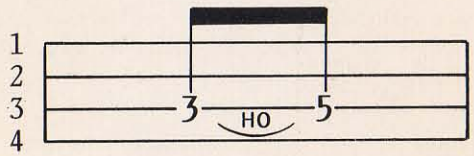


Phil Lynott

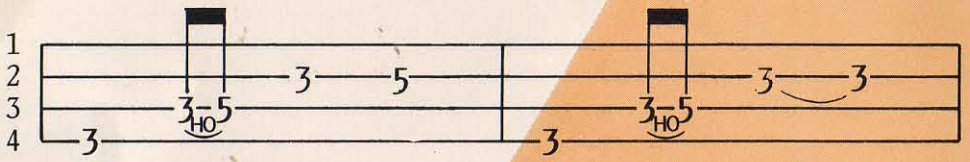
HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS

To create a more fluent or flowing run, hammer-ons and pull-offs are essential.

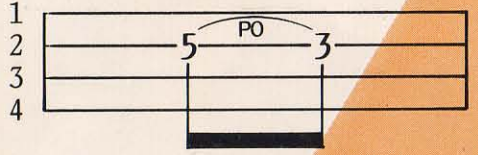
THE HAMMER-ON



HAMMER-ON EXERCISE

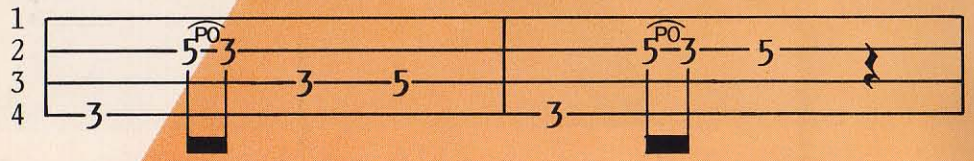


THE PULL-OFF



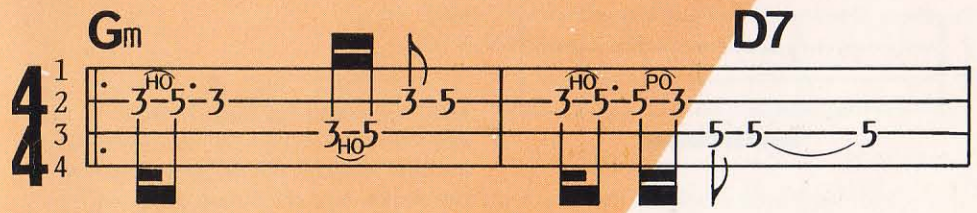
This time, fret the note with the third finger of your left hand, (with your 1st finger on the 3rd fret in readiness for next exercise) strike the string. Then pull your third finger downwards and off the string, leaving the second note sounding.

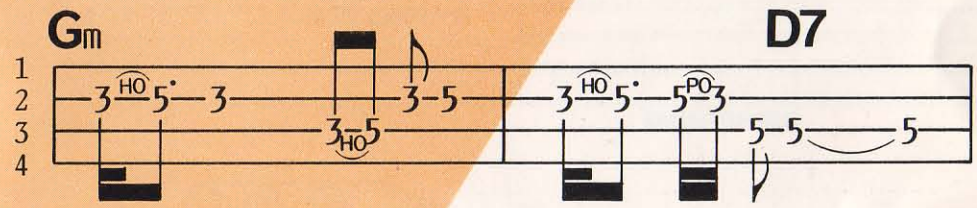
PULL-OFF EXERCISE

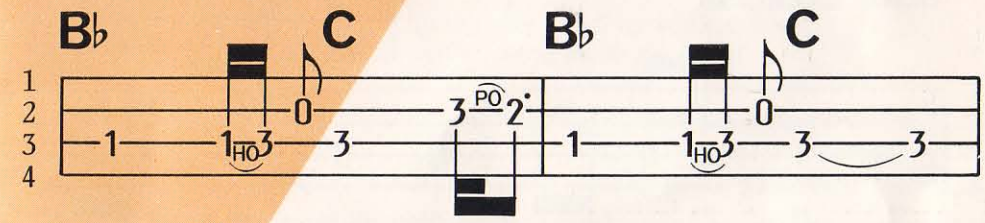


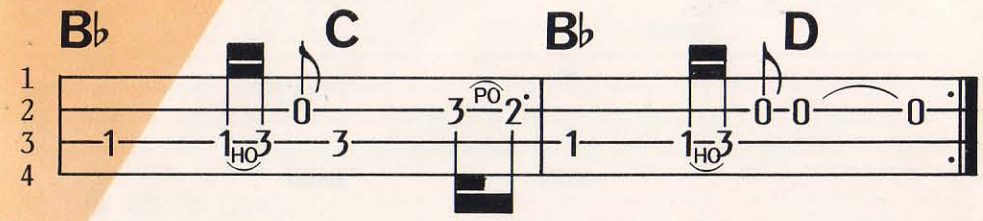
BASS SOLO

Using Hammer-Ons and Pull-Offs



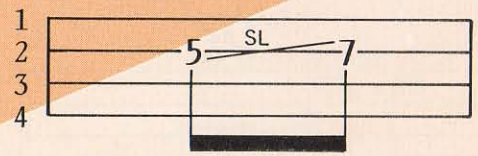






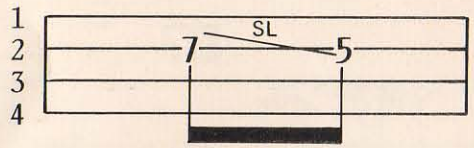
SLIDES

SLIDE GOING UP

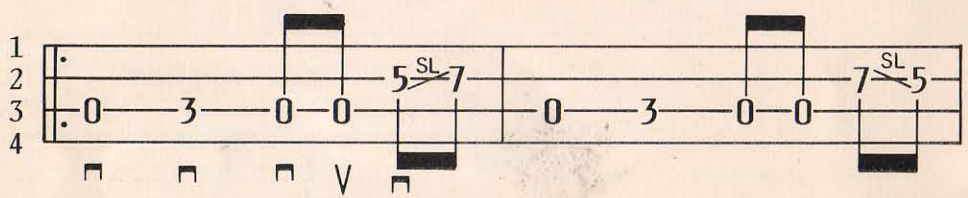


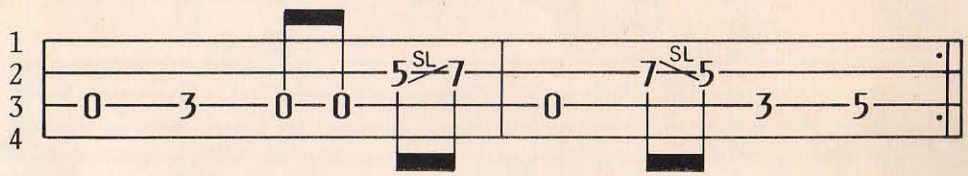
This is a useful technique where you literally 'Slide' from one note to another without taking your finger off the string. The effect can be quite stunning when mastered properly. It will add sparkle to whatever you are playing, whether it be a riff, sequence or solo.

SLIDE GOING DOWN



SLIDE EXERCISE

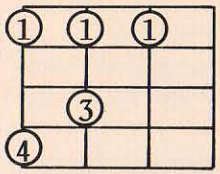




BLUES SCALES

This Pentatonic Scale Can Be Used To Form Many Bass Patterns

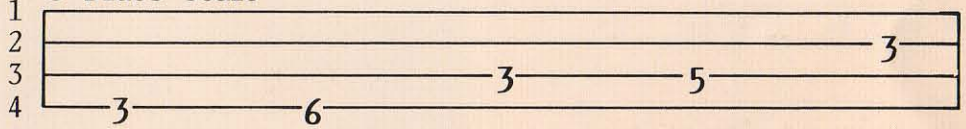
It's amazing how thousands of songs, riff solos have been created just by using five notes from the blues scale.

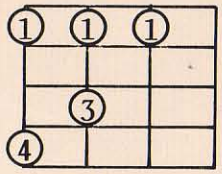


3rd Fret

Make sure you learn these scales thoroughly, you *won't* get by without them.

G Blues Scale

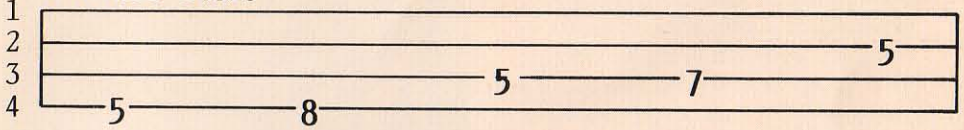


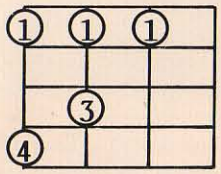


5th Fret

Every note is now moved two frets further along the finger-board.

A Blues Scale

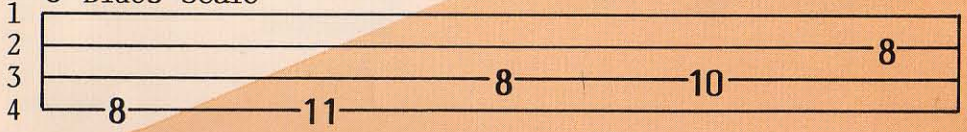




8th Fret

Every note is now moved another three frets further along the finger-board.

C Blues Scale

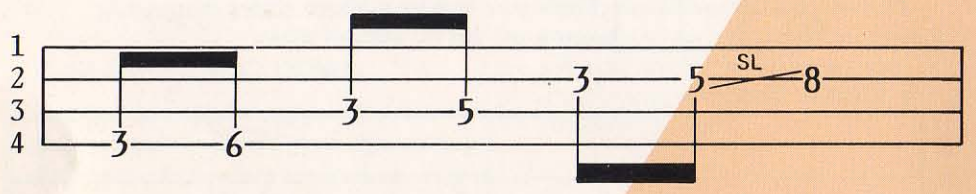


EXTENDED BLUES SCALES

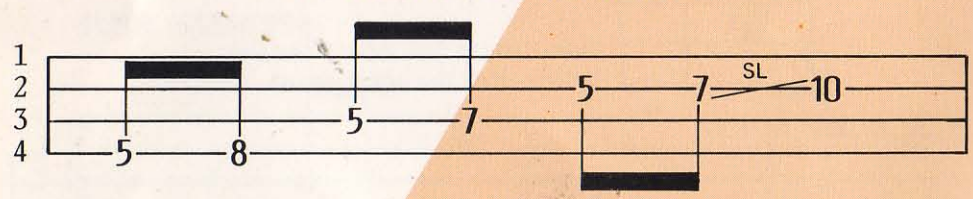
Incorporating Slide Technique

We will now move the blues scale away from the box pattern (notes confined within four frets in a row).

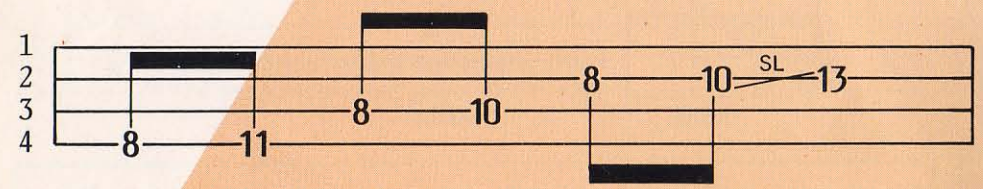
G EXTENDED BLUES SCALE



A EXTENDED BLUES SCALE



C EXTENDED BLUES SCALE



. . . As the electric bass guitar was a new instrument, there were no fixed conditions as to what its scale length should be. When Gibson, anxious to get into this potentially large market, launched their first bass in 1953, it had a 77·5 cm (30") scale. This should have made these basses even more popular with guitarists, but in practice most bass players preferred the longer string length because of the extra depth it gave to the sound. One by-product of trying to appeal to guitarist which was extensively in practice in the late Fifties and Sixties was that of providing extra strings, to make five and six-string basses quite common. The principle seems to have been to extend the instrument's range by adding strings instead of frets, for example the Fender five string that appeared around 1964 was a short-scale instruments with only 15 frets! It is interesting to note that five strings basses are currently becoming popular again, but these normally have a B string below the E rather than a C above the G as used to be the case. It was Fender in general, and the "Precision" in particular, which were to rule the roost for at least twenty years. In 1954 the "Precision" had contouring added to it, to make it more comfortable for the player. In 1957 a new bridge, pickup, scratch-plate and headstock were also added to make it resemble the Stratocaster guitar more closely. Very little has changed about the Precision to this day, apart from some changes to the fingerboard. Bass players who wanted more than the "Precision", could buy the Jazz, introduced in 1960, which had two pickups, a narrower neck and an offset body shape. There were, of course, other instruments of note to be had. Gibson seemed to have got the recipe right on a couple of occasions, for example their two pickup EB3 — which was often used by Jack Bruce to get his powerful sound — and the long scale "Thunderbird" bass, introduced at the end of 1963, which was favoured by leading players, such as John Entwhistle of *The Who.*

—continued on page 28—

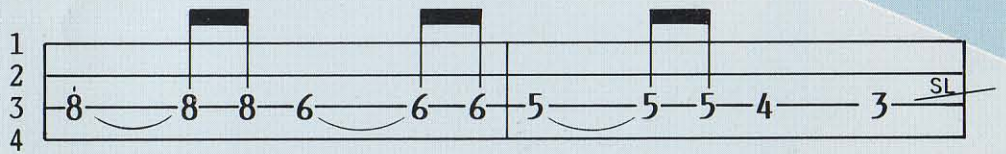
Two of Gibson's efforts to counteract Fender's market dominance. The "EB-1" (left), launched in 1953 and the "Thunderbird IV" (right), from the mid 60"s. (Both formerly in the Entwhistle collection).

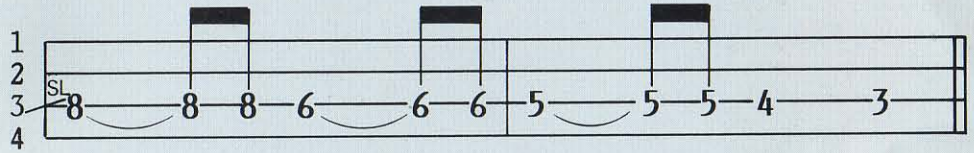
FINGERSTYLE

FINGERSTYLE BASS TECHNIQUE

Fingerstyle playing gives a more mellow sound than plectrum style and opens up more creative possibilities, this will also help to set you for the slap bass techniques later on.

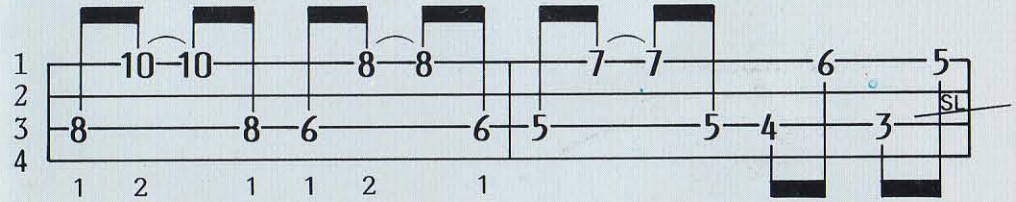
As this exercise is played on one string you only need to use the index finger of your right hand.

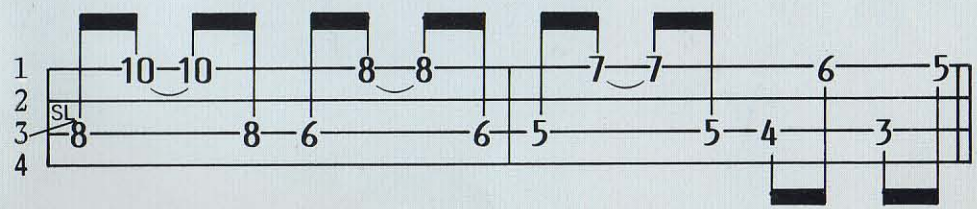


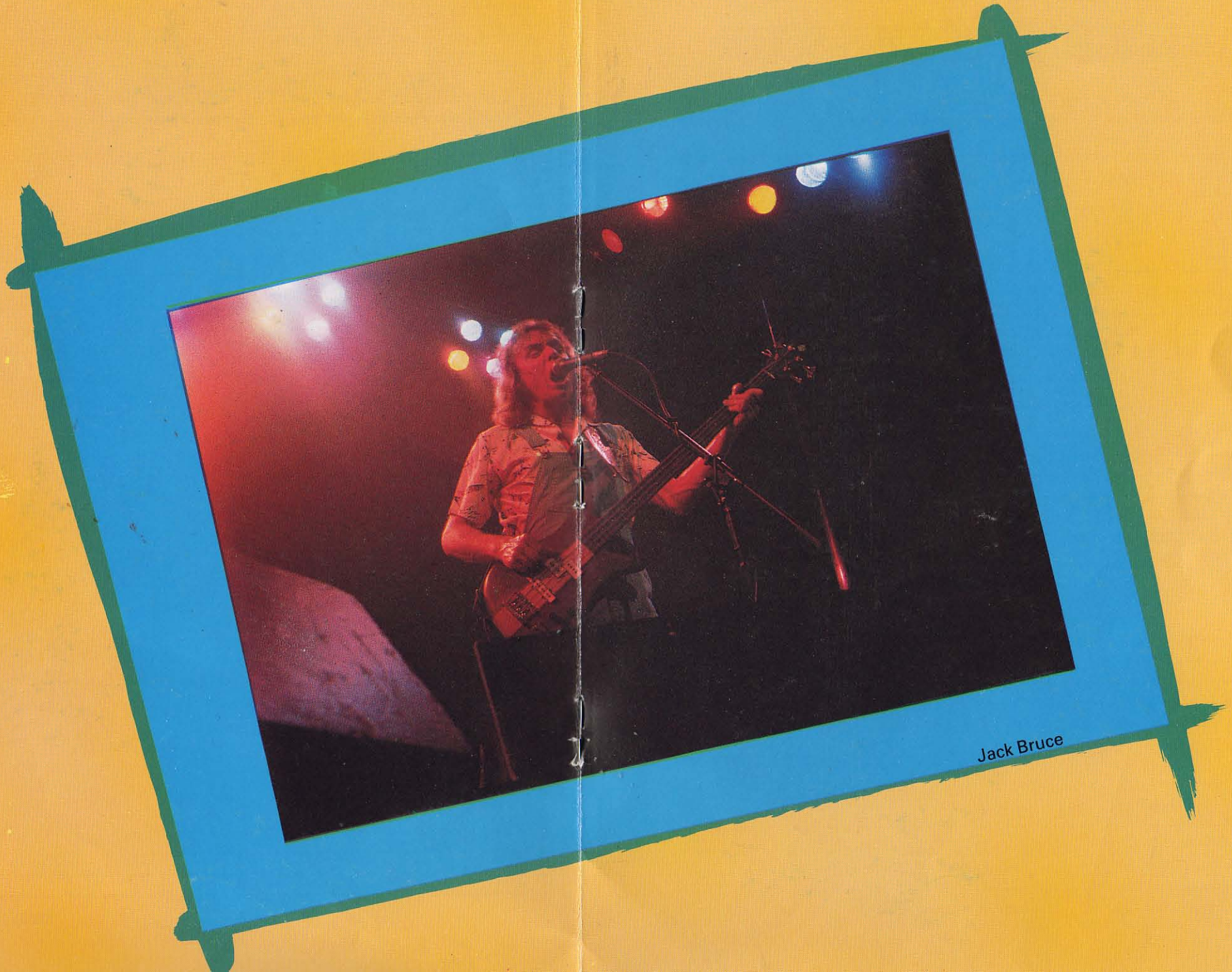


OCTAVES

Use 1st and 2nd R.H. fingers.



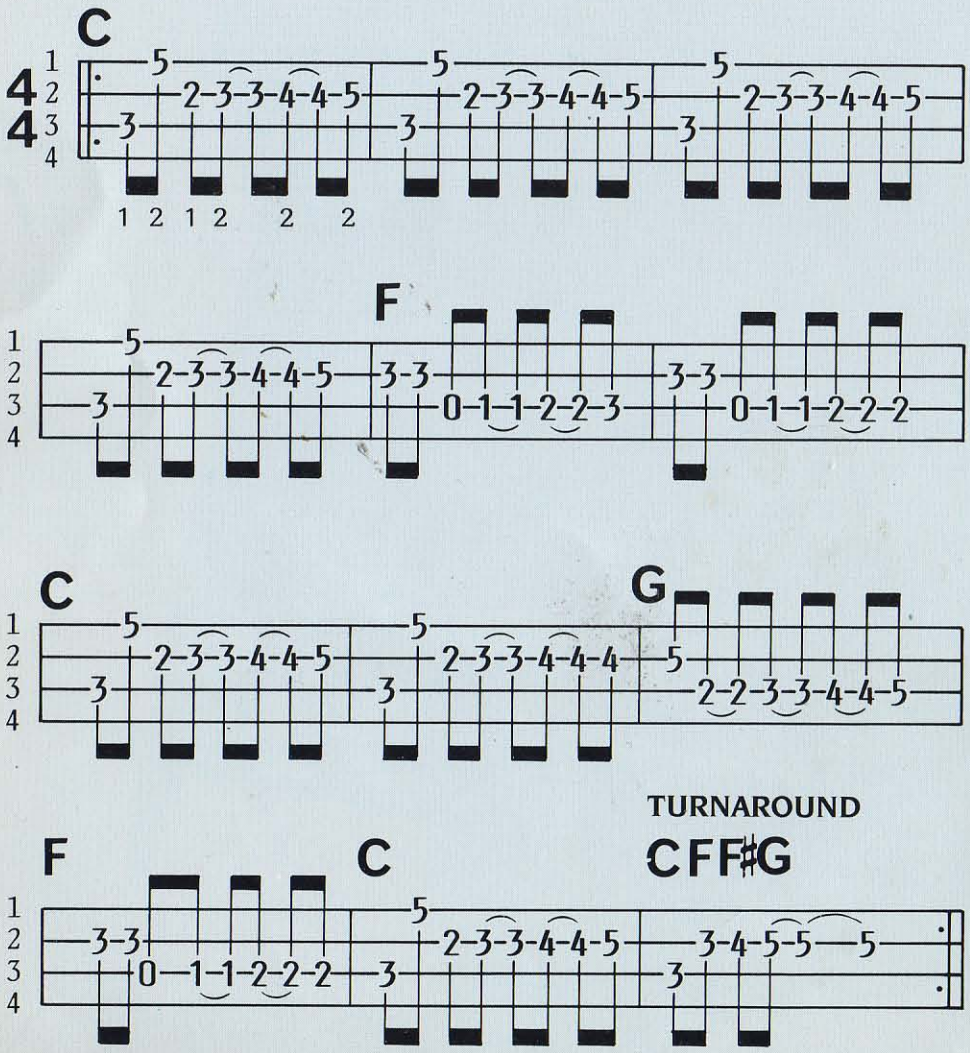




Jack Bruce

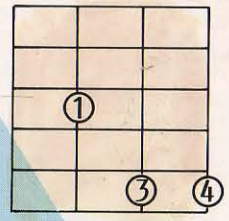
FINGERSTYLE BASS SOLO

This fairly easy fingerstyle bass solo is based on a straight-forward 12 bar in C with a turnaround on the last bar.
A turnaround is a selection of notes or chords to bring you back to the beginning of the sequence again hence the term turnaround although you can still end with this.



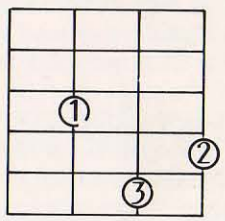
BASS CHORD SHAPES

FOR NEXT EXERCISE

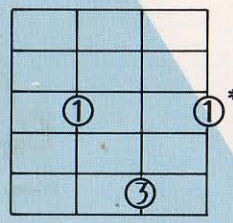


C[1]

This is the first C chord shape.

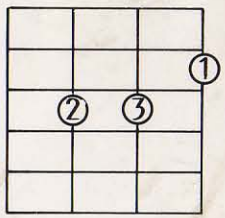


Cm7 C Maj7

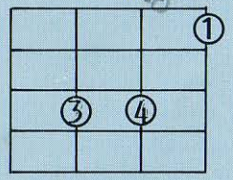


C7

*BARRE

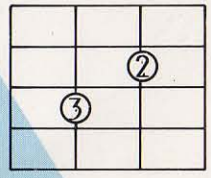


F



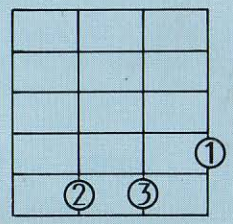
Fm

You really have to stretch your fingers on this chord shape.

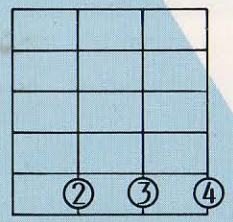


C[2]

This is the second C chord shape.



G



Gsus4

A BARRE is where you place your L.H. Finger (usually the 1st) across several strings.

. . . It was not long before Rickenbacker got in on the act with their 4000 model, which was eclipsed by the considerable popularity of its successor, the 4001. Not only did this model look good, with its inlaid and bound neck and purfling around the body, but it also sounded good, and still does today. Notable users of Rickenbacker's have included Chris Squire of *Yes*, Bruce Foxton of *The Jam* and Lemmy of *Motorhead!*

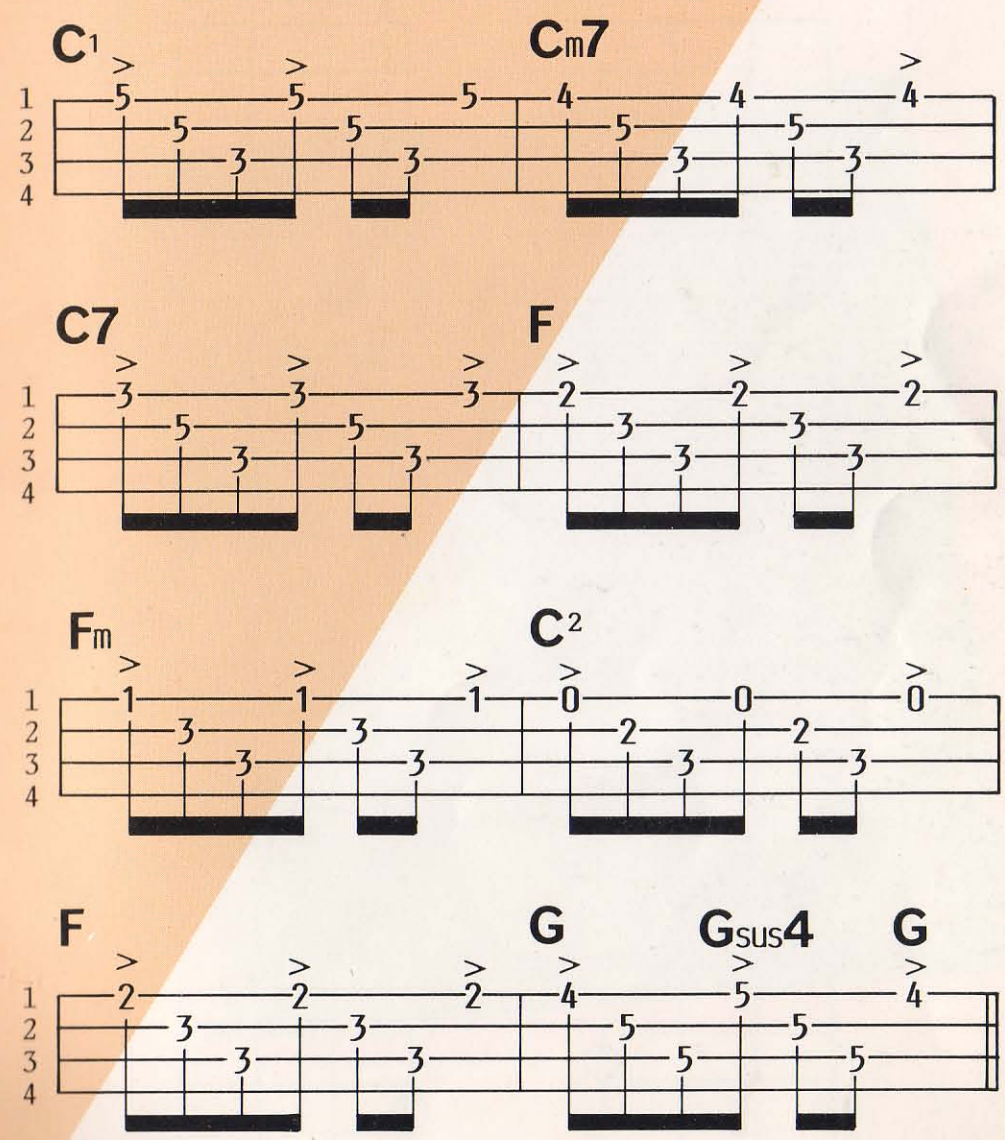
This "Plexiglass" see-through bass, dating from the late 60's, is an early example of the use of synthetic materials for guitar construction. It was made by Dan Armstrong/Ampeg.

Despite the emergence of a number of talented and innovative players, like Larry Graham, who is widely acknowledged as having pioneered the Slap style during his days with *Sly & The Family Stone*, the bass was still regarded, even in the Seventies, as being the instrument for the less talented guitarist in the band. Certainly, the instrument itself did not seem to have advanced much in the previous decade. However, this was all about to change. The firm of Alembic were responsible for much of this. The company started off as an extension of the band *Grateful Dead* in the heyday of psychedelia, and it evolved from this into a company that provided instruments for thousands of bands. They were the first to exploit the potential of many features which we take almost for granted on modern basses, such as active powered circuitry (which makes boosting the signal possible as well as cutting it), exotic timbers, a through-body neck, solid brass hardware and sustain blocks. Some of the innovations however may have been a little fanciful, like putting red LED's all along the edge of the fingerboard, but most of the work done there was very valuable, including early use of advance materials, like carbon graphite, originally developed in 1977. Alembic "converted" the likes of Stanley Clarke to the sound of their basses, and between 1978 and 1982, some 2,350 instruments were built, most of which were bass guitars, proof that there was a demand for a more upmarket instrument.

—*continued on page 40*—

UNTITLED BASS PATTERN

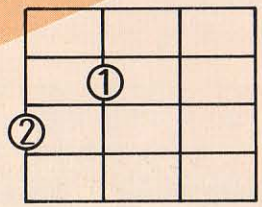
> = Accent Note (Strike Note Hard)



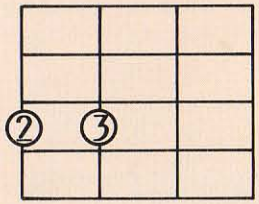
BASS CHORD SHAPES

Use these two-note chords to add variety to your playing. The names above the charts refer to the intervals between the notes.

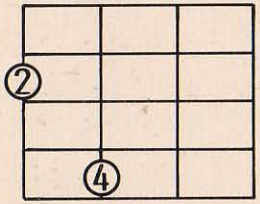
MAJ 3RD



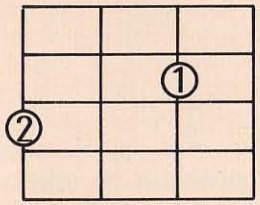
PERFECT 4TH



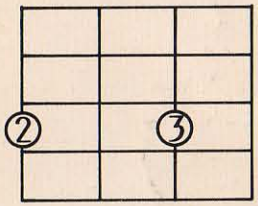
PERFECT 5TH



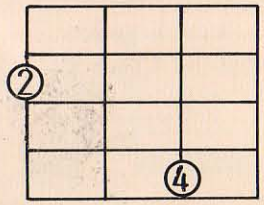
MAJ 6TH



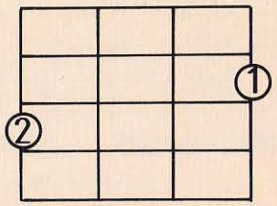
MIN 7TH



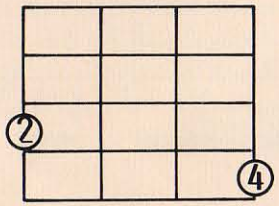
OCTAVE



MAJ 9TH



MAJ 10TH



SLAP BASS

SLAP BASS

USING THE THUMB

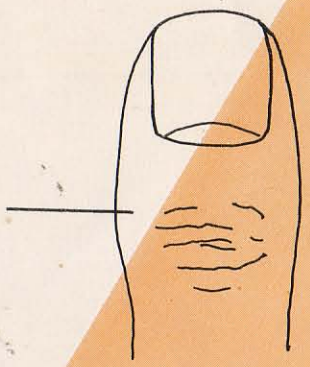
STRINGS

For slap bass style I would recommend light gauge roundwound strings, 0·040 top, or less. This will give you a tighter sound and prevent serious finger damage!

POSITIONING THE BASS

Many players who slap a lot tend to wear the bass higher up on the chest. This is because it is important to play at an angle where your wrist is relaxed, not twisted. Experiment until you find an angle which is comfortable for you. Hit the bass strings around the top fret.

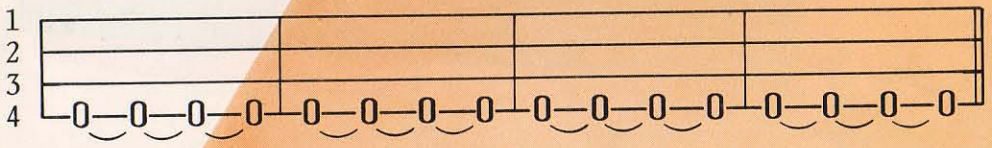
The slap sound comes from the string hitting the frets.
Use the knuckle to hit the strings. This will give you the clearest tone.



POINTS TO WATCH

(i) Don't accidently dampen the strings with your right arm.
(ii) Don't forget to move your thumb away after striking.
(iii) Don't hit too hard — work on developing a light feel with a relaxed hand, spin the whole hand at the wrist.

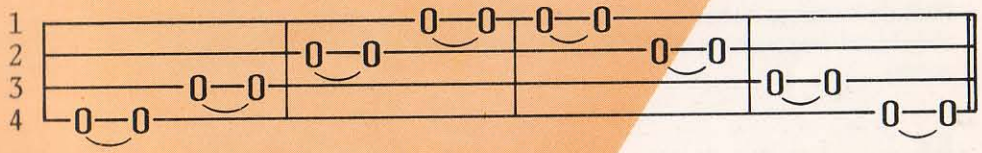
THE SLAP



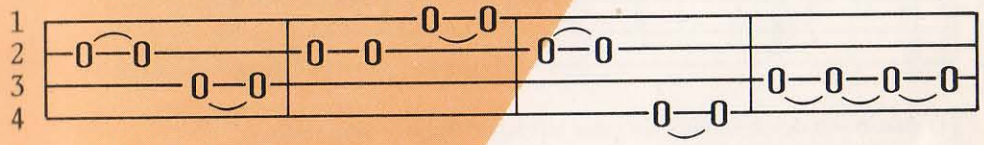
OPEN STRING EXERCISE

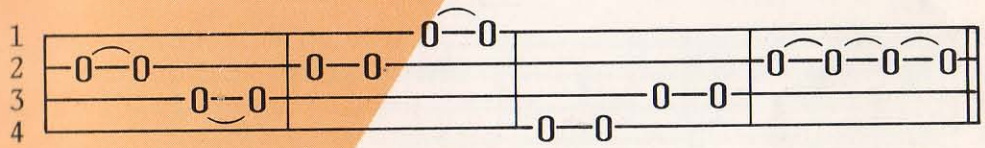
Once you've got the right sound — you can start getting your thumb to hit the correct string.
The following two exercises are designed to help you.

Exercise 1



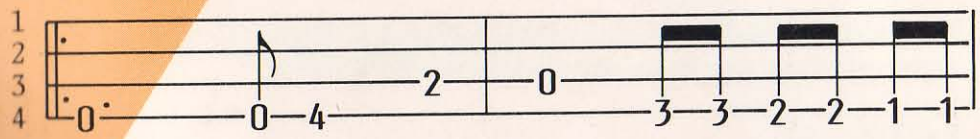
Exercise 2

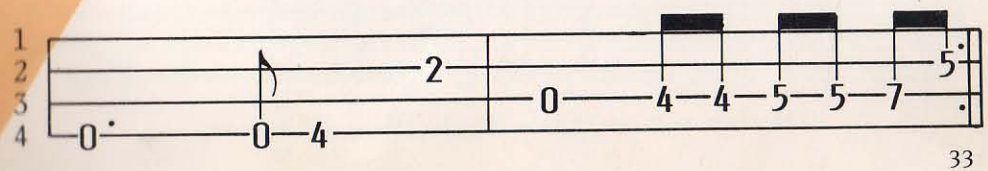




The next piece features half-beat notes in quick succession. Short notes come into slap a lot, so it's important to develop control and speed.

FIRST FUNK RIFF

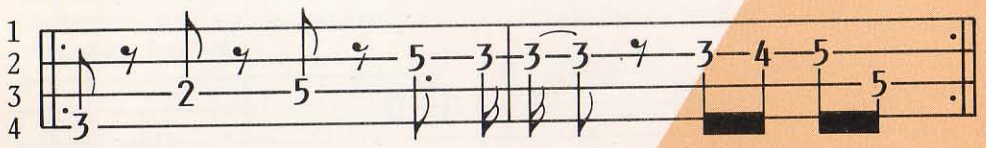




DAMPING

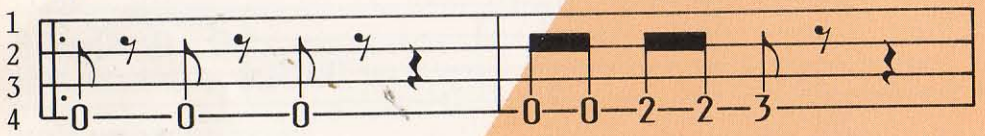
Damping with the left hand is very important to get the correct sound. There are several different ways of doing this:
First, try fretting a note then lifting your (L.H.) finger slightly to kill the note. Your finger should still be touching the string. (The small rests are the same length as the half-beat notes).

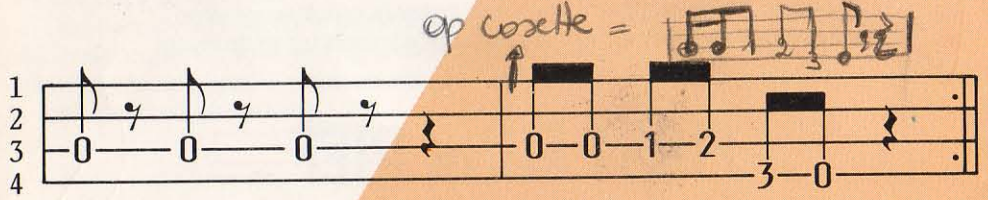
Ex.1



To damp the open strings lay your left hand fingers over them just after being struck.

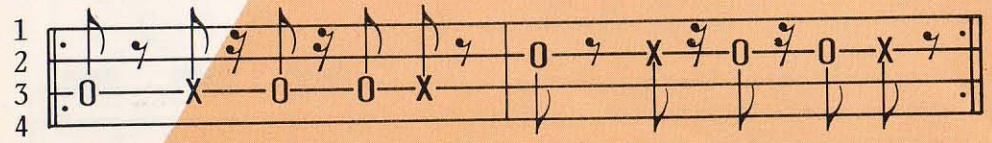
Ex.2





Lastly, for a more percussive sound damp the strings by laying your left hand fingers over them, then hit the strings where marked with an X:

Ex.3



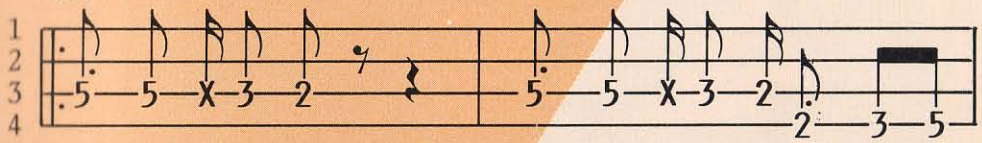
(The short rests are half the length of the half-beat rest).

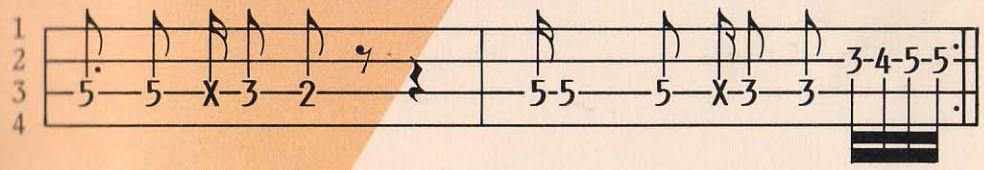
THE CLICK NOTE

Most funky bass lines use this "Click" note quite extensively, for a tight, percussive feel, because there is no sustain on them.

The next exercises use damped and fretted quarter-beat notes.
Take it slowly to start with.

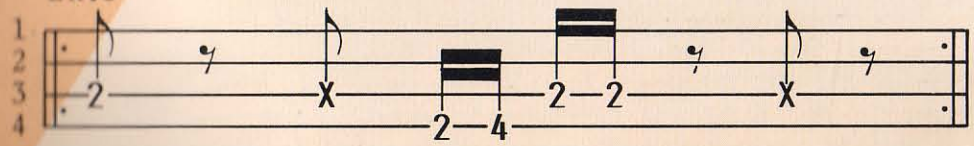
Ex.4





When making up your own bass lines, it can be useful to let the click note supply the main beat in the bar that you do not wish to play: e.g.:—

Ex.5

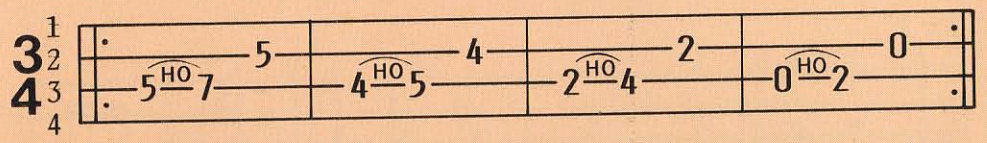


SLAP BASS HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS

Now its time to apply some of the hammer-on and pull-off techniques you first saw on page 16 of the slap style.

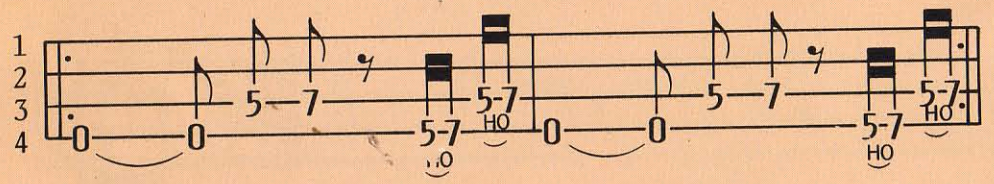
Note that this exercise is in ¾ time, i.e. it has three beats to the bar.

SLAP HAMMER-ONS



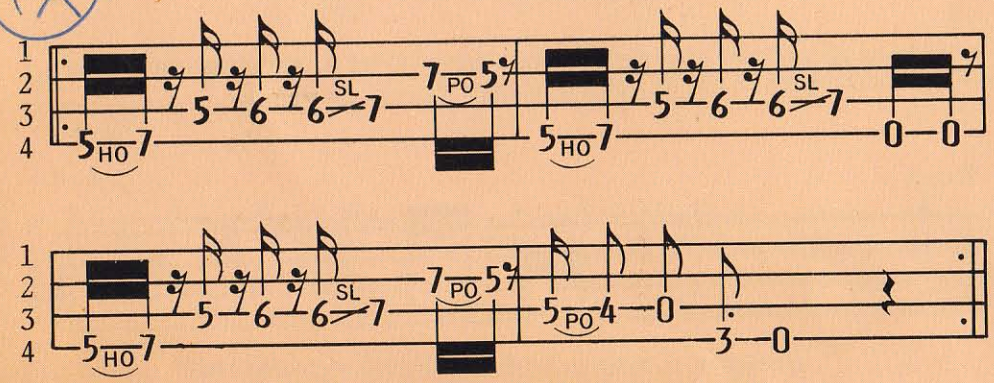
Often you will want to use two successive hammer-ons, as in this riff. Try using your first and fourth fingers to do the hammering.

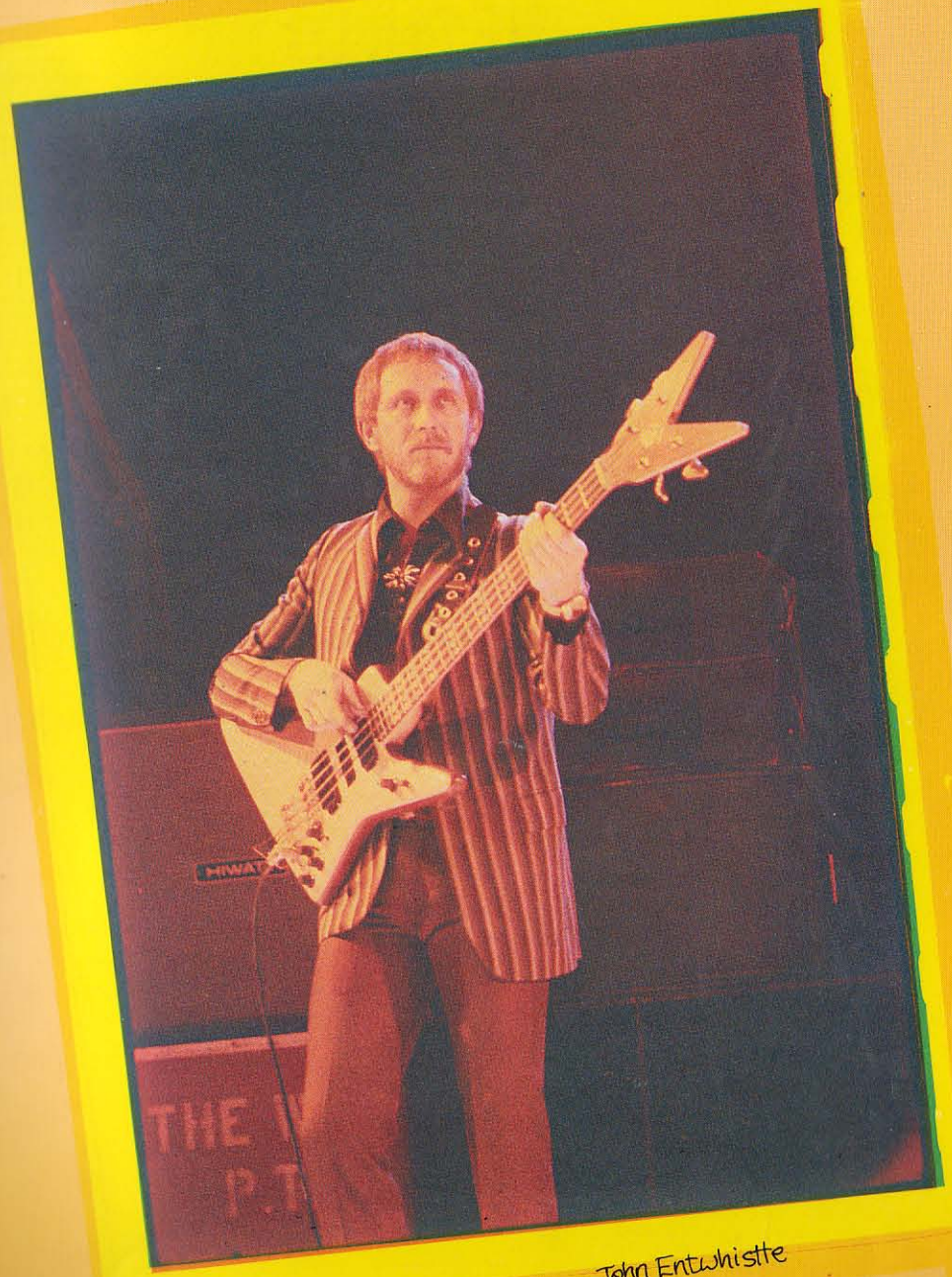
DOUBLE HAMMER-ONS



The next riff uses the hammer-on and the pull-off in conjunction with each other. Note that a slide is also incorporated.

HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS

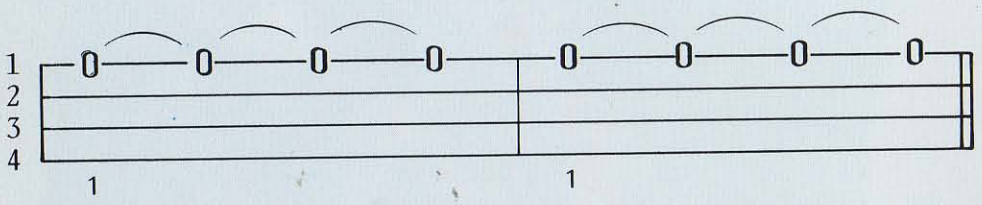




THE PULL

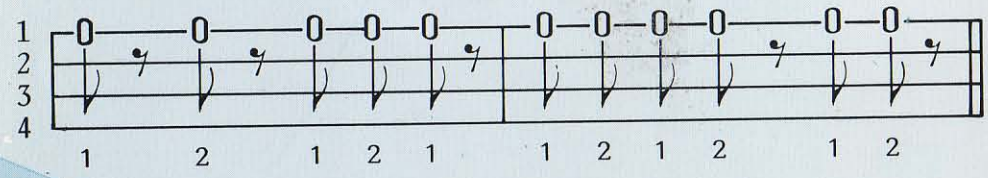
When you are pulling the string, don't be too violent! You can get the right sound with a relatively short string travel. Only use the *tips* of the fingers. Curl the tip of the right hand index finger around the G or 1st string and pull quickly, but not too hard.

THE PULL (ONE FINGER)



When you start getting the right sound, try bringing the second finger into play. To kill a note, use the same damping technique as you would on a slapped open string (see page 32).

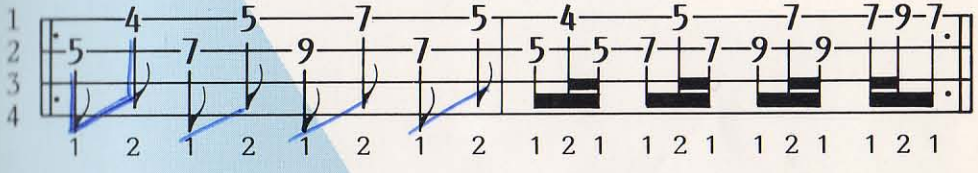
THE PULL (TWO FINGERS)



The trick of developing a smooth technique is to alternate your first and second fingers each time you play consecutive notes on the same string. You will probably find it easiest to begin with the index finger as marked.

The next technique is to allocate a different finger to the two top strings. Use the first finger on the 1st string and the second finger on the second. This enables you to keep your hand position more constant in faster passages.

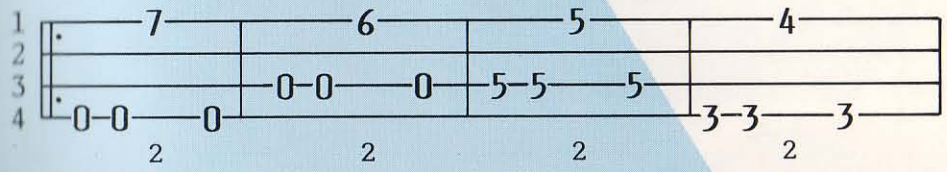
THE PULL (TWO STRINGS)

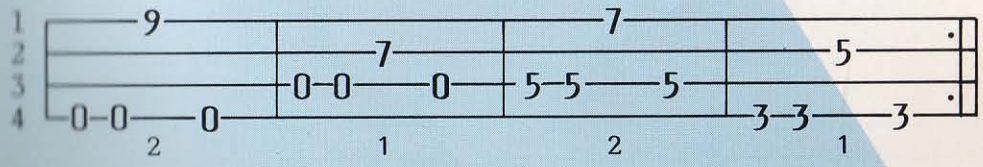


SLAP AND PULL

The next exercise combines slap and pull. When a note is to be pulled, the finger suggested is indicated under the tablature. Here, slap the first note, then pull the second with your second finger.

COMBINING SLAP & PULL





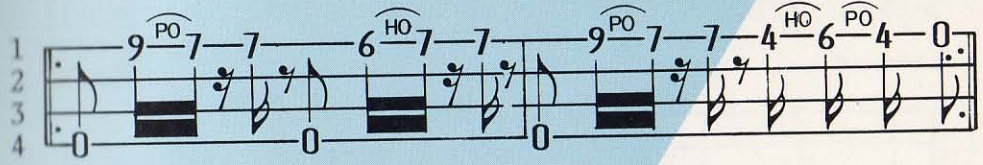
One of the earliest Steinberger basses, the serial number being 003. It was formerly in the Entwistle collection.

Next came Ned Steinberger, a design engineer, who set about reinventing the bass guitar from an ergonomic point of view. Only a non-musician could have come up with a result as radical as his was; no headstock and hardly any body either. What there was left of the bass, was made from plastics to give it rigidity and sustain lost by removing so much wood! The notion of the bass being a somehow "unfashionable" instrument was finally squashed. Players like Mark King and Jaco Pastorius for example, have given the bass guitar the opportunity to shine in the band context, rather than to be stuck in the background. The bass, at least, has become a virtuoso Instrument!

TRILLS

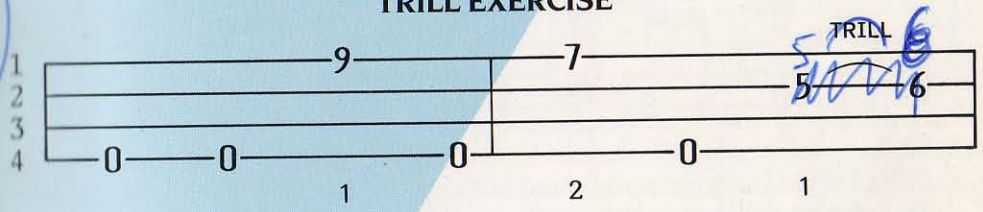
Now we can incorporate the hammer-on and pull-off techniques. Only the first note is plucked.

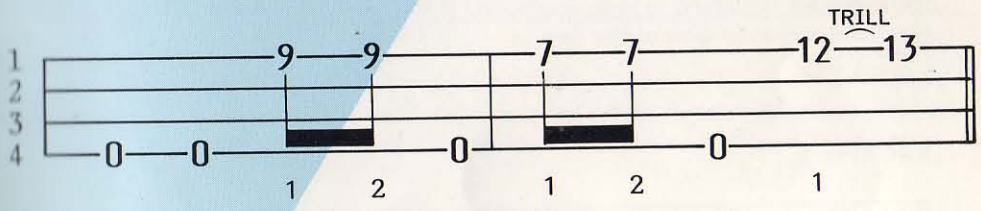
RAPID HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS



If you hammer-on and pull-off in rapid succession, you end up with what is known as a trill.
If playing a trill two frets apart, use the first and third (L.H.).
If one fret apart, use the first and second finger.

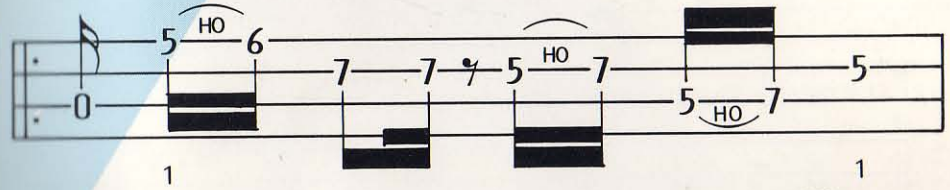
TRILL EXERCISE

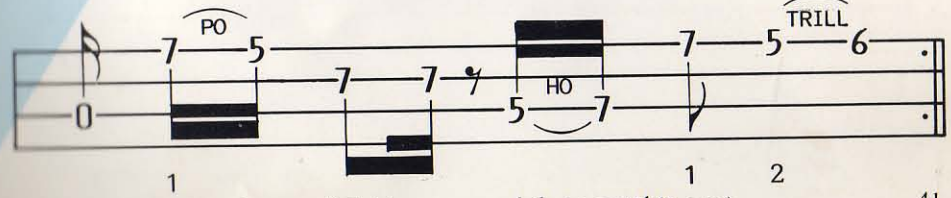




This riff puts these left hand techniques in context.

RIFF USING TRILLS





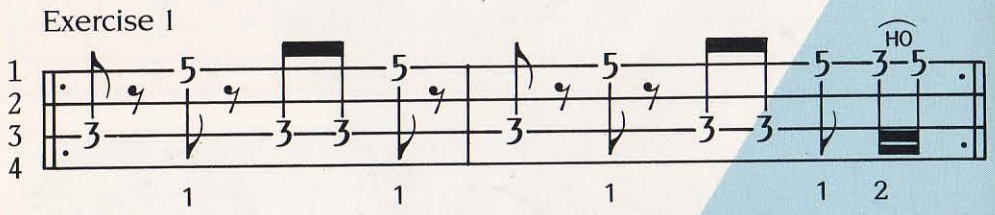
(Don't worry if it takes you a while to get this one).

SLAP AND PULL

The best way of making up your own bass lines is to listen to how these techniques are used on records.

Listen to the drums in particular: try putting the slap on the bass drum beat and the pull on the snare as below.

Exercise 1

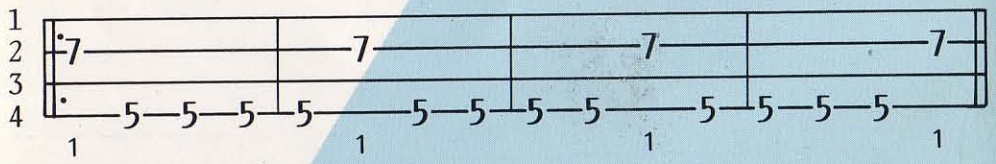


Exercise 2 This can be taken further:

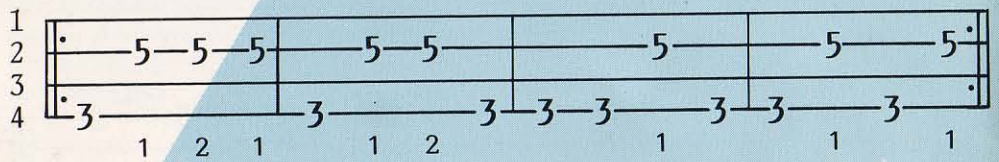
Being flexible as to when you slap and when you pull in a riff is important. The following exercises are designed to help you build up speed and increase your versatility. Practice them from slow to fast tempo.

SPEED

Exercise 1



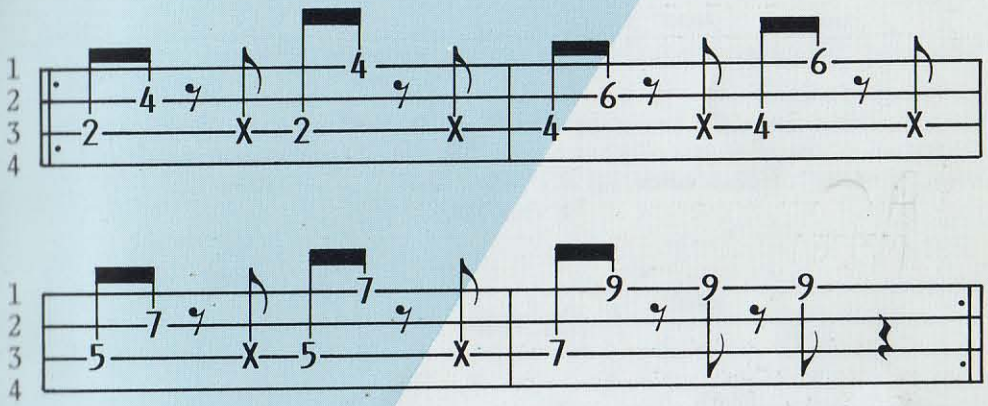
Exercise 2 Visualising the line in terms of its bar units will help you here.



Now we'll try to put several of these elements together. The next two riffs will help you to develop a light feel and make the most use of your hand motion.

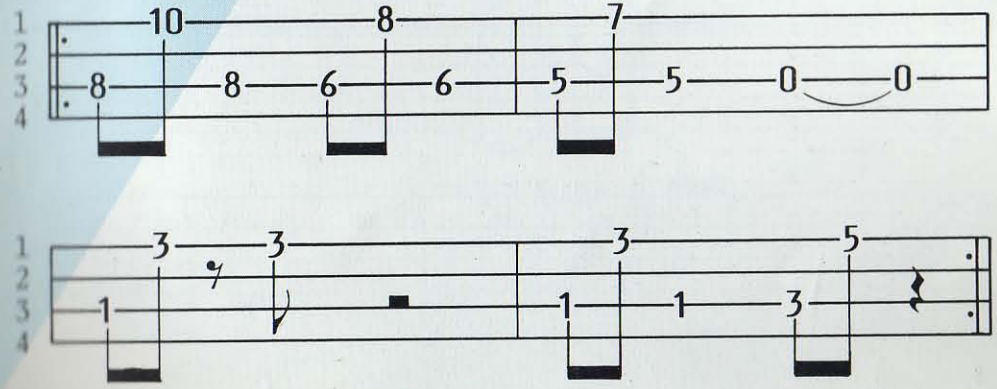
With the first riff, a click-note is closely followed by a slapped one, with a pull following. This click/slap/pull sequence is frequently used in funk. The trick is to flick your finger upwards and into the pulled string as your thumb comes back off the slapped one, so that the shape of your hand varies as little as possible.

DOUBLED-UP RIFF



You can go further by slapping the lower string again after you've pulled the higher one. This will give you a slap/pull/slap sequence, with a bit of triplet feel.

TRIPLE RIFF



BASS SOLO

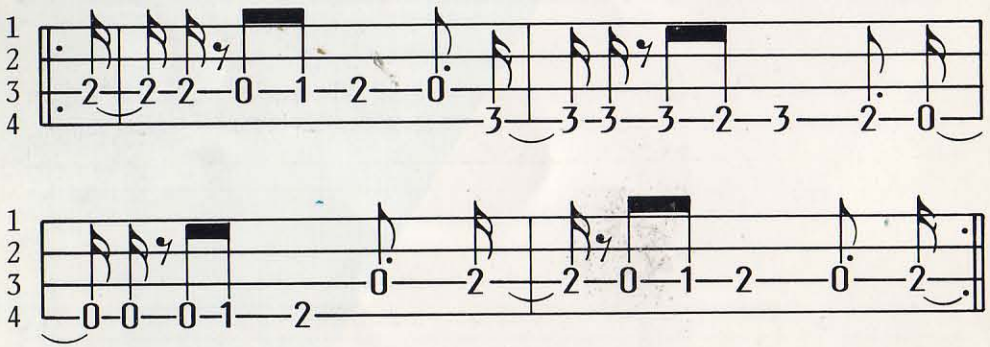
Now that you have acquired the necessary skills, you can start to improvise on simple riffs and themes. The secret of effective improvising is not to overdo things, or at least all the time!

In the following solo, there are four sections. The first establishes the theme. The second adds a damped slap for a more percussive effect. The third adds octave pulls and a turnaround by ascending where the original descended and dicto.

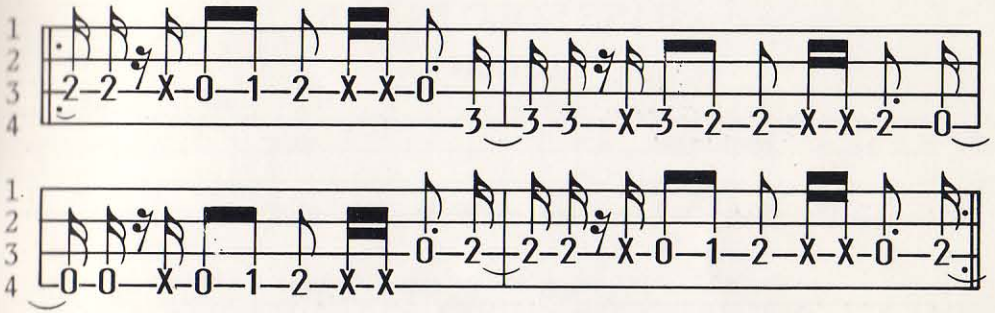
Remember that pulls are indicated by a number below the tablature.

Note the tied notes at the beginning of each bar. The feel this gives the solo is called "anticipation" (because you play just before the beat). It is a common feature of funk bass. It's not as complicated to play as it looks!

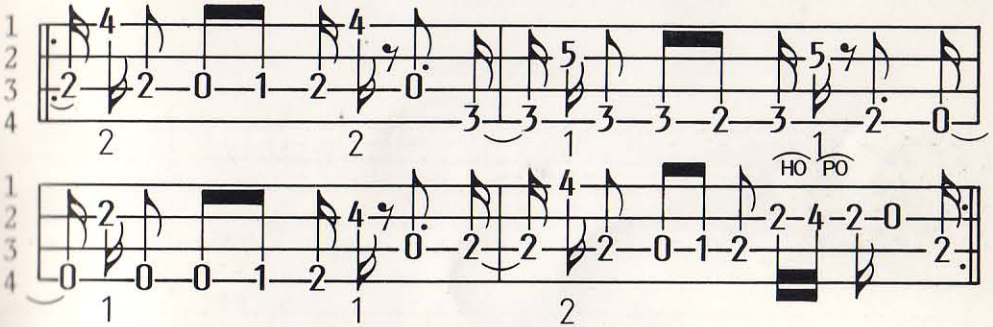
SECTION 1



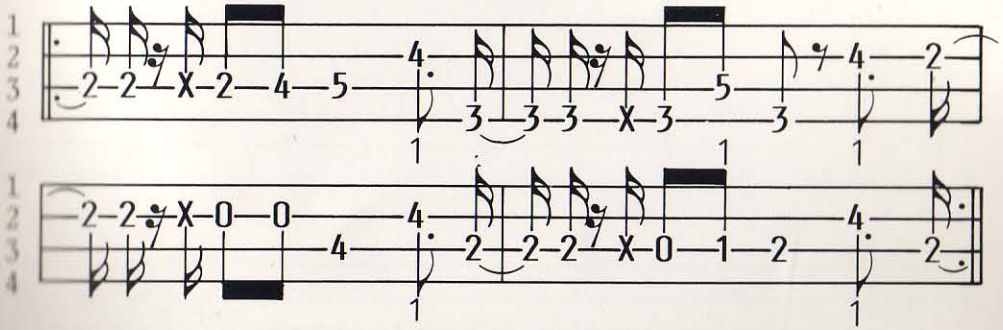
SECTION 2



SECTION 3



SECTION 4

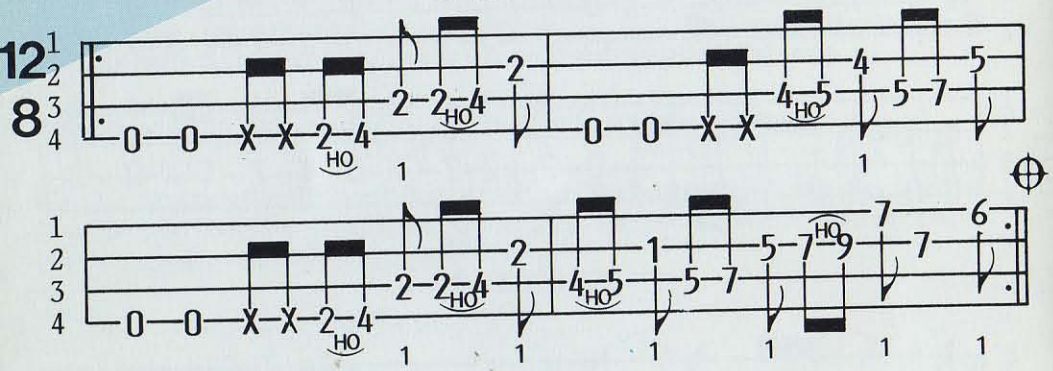


OTHER TIME SIGNATURES

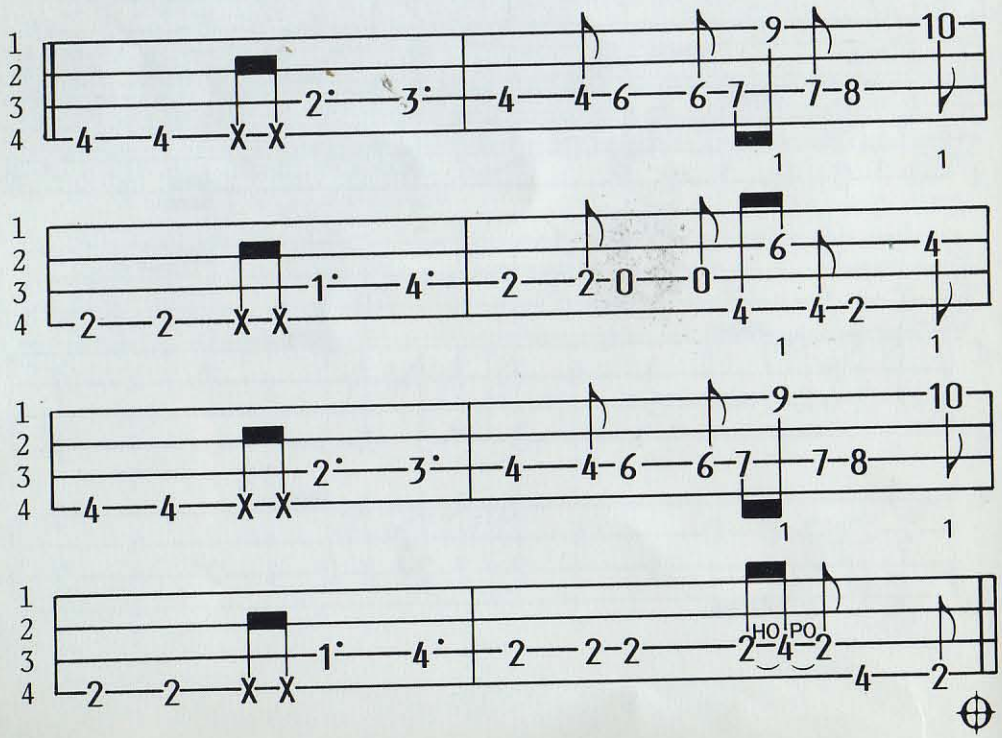
As a last thought, remember that you don't have to be restricted to 4/4 time and slap. Another signature which is very effective is 12/8. This means there are twelve ♪ in a bar. The feel is of triplets within a four-beat framework.

BASS SOLO IN 12/8

SECTION 1



SECTION 2



For many years the Bass Player
wasn't allowed any frills or individuality.
His job was to keep steady time
and put down a rock hard foundation
usually for the lead guitarist.
But now times have changed,
with the arrival of the "Slap Bass Style",
which allows the Bass Player to
become very much more the "Frontman„.
This technique along with the
Plectrum and Finger Style Bass Method,
which Alan Warner has presented in this book
is demonstrated by the expert Bassist
and Recording Artist; Martin Brassel.
While this Book and Cassette
is suitable for the complete beginner,
it does however, move on quickly to the more
advanced and sensational "Slap Bass Style„.

SOODLUM
(FLEA)

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